

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting permits

Arts Space: Important Topics for Buying or Leasing a Space

Updated December 21, 2010

This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) is designed to provide you with more information on what you should know and consider when undertaking a move to purchase or lease an arts-appropriate facility. The purpose of the CAM is to outline the issues of successful facilities, development considerations, building code and permitting, and land use and zoning. The target audience for this CAM is individual artists, or an arts organization, it is not intended for complex multi-use large-scale facilities.

We strongly urge you to visit the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) early in your preparations. If at all possible, discuss your plans with a DPD land use planner and/or a permit specialist in the Applicant Services Center (ASC) before you lease or buy a new space. The ASC is located in the Seattle Municipal Tower on 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000.

ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL FACILITIES

Good Design

Whether you have been asked to vacate your current space or you are voluntarily choosing to upgrade or move to a new location, there are several important issues that you should consider as you begin your search.

Some popular cultural facilities are shoehorned into buildings that can pose challenges for the organization. Bad design can adversely affect your audiences, image, and way of doing business. Good design — particularly in new buildings or renovations — can help your organization grow and operate more smoothly.

Design issues to consider:

- Where are the windows? Are there any on the street? Is the entry visible?
- Is the space interesting and inviting?
- Does the space offer informal gathering spaces?
- Are there specialty spaces?
- Are there multi-purpose spaces?
- What are the building's important amenities?
- Can you easily phase in new construction and renovations into the space?

Are you Choosing the Right Location?

Before you buy or lease a facility, you should speak with a DPD land use planner in the ASC for the following issues:

- Zoning
- Parking

Is the Building Appropriate for Your Needs?

If you are expecting your space to accommodate 50 or more people, additional building code requirements might apply. This includes:

- Seismic requirements
- Sprinklers
- Additional exits
- Accessibility

If you are expecting to do a lot of construction, please speak with a DPD permit specialist in the ASC.

Other Issues to Keep In Mind When Purchasing or Leasing a Facility

- Public transportation
- Restaurants
- Other cultural institutions nearby
- Neighborhood attitude toward arts activities
- Visibility
- Cost
- Foot traffic



- Image of area
- Audience proximity
- Perception of safety

Programs and Finances

Programming success is dependent on many factors, including the organization's overall financial stability and success. Consider:

- Do you have careful budgeting and good financial management practices?
- What does your audience want, and can you deliver these services in a financially sound manner?
- Can the facility be used for multiple uses? What other ways can it generate revenue?

Community Relations

Cultural facilities are important institutional assets to their communities. The best cultural facilities understand what it takes to play this role successfully and do it on a continuous basis.

You will need to consider:

- Partnerships
- Meeting community needs
- Outreach
- Membership in community groups
- Role in community development

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Project Planning

Make sure you have a business plan prepared. At minimum, the plan should:

- Define how the organization will absorb the impact of the facility.
- Identify expected expense changes (increased staff, administrative costs, facility maintenance costs, fundraising costs).
- Establish new revenue goals and define how they will be met.
- Determine cash flow needs.

Plan for the immediate and long-term building needs. This involves either changes or additions to the building design, from simple changes to additional signage to complex modifications to room configuration.

Construction Period

Myriad problems can ensue during the construction period, most of which — such as the weather, or late delivery of materials — are difficult to control. Develop contingency plans, patience and flexibility.

Construction glitches can postpone completion and increase costs. Common stumbling blocks include:

- To save money, organizations choose not to hire a construction manager, eventually costing themselves both time and money.
- Decisions on design elements are made too late, and accommodating them requires redoing or adding to the construction plans. This happens when:
 - Ideas about the design change.
 - The project has been rushed.
 - Too many people are making decisions and are taking too long to reach a consensus.
 - The decision maker is overextended.
 - The organization or contractor has cash flow problems during the construction. For some time, more money flows out than comes in. Contractors must wait to be paid, which can cause problems.
- An organization wrongly relies upon its architects to know and understand all city, state and federal regulations, which cost time and money.

HELPFUL TIPS

Seven ways to make your building development or rehab project run more smoothly:

- **Get organized:** Space development is a complex process that usually takes several years. Your files, financial information, resources, etc., must be in order for you to effectively manage this process.
- **Research:** Before you make any building purchase, make sure you understand the condition of the building, zoning, and the permit process if you want to change the structure. You can find out more information by visiting the ASC.
- **Check your zoning status:** You don't want to commit to a building and start the planning process, only to learn that you can't use the space for your intended purposes. Go to the ASC and talk with a land use planner or **visit DPD's website to access the Land Use Q&A on the "Online Tools" page: www.seattle.gov/dpd/onlineservices.**

- Get your finances in order: Understanding how your finances work will better prepare you for a development project. Work with an accountant from the beginning and conduct a financial feasibility study.
- Get your board in order: As previously discussed, having a board of directors with depth and a range of skills can help the project succeed. Well-connected and knowledgeable board members can bring new resources and support to the project, and help you avoid costly mistakes.
- Get your staff behind the project: All parties involved with the project must understand and support the goals. A disinterested or unsupportive staff can derail the project.
- Be patient: A development project is a major undertaking.

BUILDING CODE AND PERMITTING

Now that you have taken into account the aspects of successful facilities it is important to develop a clear, cohesive and organized plan. Once you have identified a potential space, you should begin researching your project with DPD to uncover issues that may require special attention.

When an artist or organization moves into a new space, changing the configuration of the space or using it for a different purpose will generally require a permit from DPD. Permitting will be an important initial step for your project. Please see DPD CAM 102, *Small Business and Getting your Use and Building Permit from DPD* for a comprehensive overview of the process. CAM 102 can be found at: <http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/CAMs/CamDetail.aspx?cn=102>.

For commercial plan review projects, zoning and building code reviews are always required.

Depending on the specific proposal, additional reviews could include: energy, mechanical, ECA, health, and fire.

HOW TO DETERMINE LAND USE AND ZONING ISSUES

The Land Use Code determines the activities that are legally permitted on a property. Land use and zoning will be an important consideration in the search and identification of your space.

In the chart on page four, first identify your use by definition (you will find these after the chart). Then determine how each use is allowed in the following zones.

Not all uses fall completely within the definitions and often the function of the space could include many

characteristics of several definitions. You may also have associated administrative functions which fall under the definition of “office.” Please speak to a land use planner to determine whether this type of activity would be considered a “primary use” or “accessory use” in association with your type of “facility.”

You can find more information about your zone by using the DPD GIS (geographic information system) mapping tool at www.seattle.gov/dpd/online-services.com.

Definition of "Uses"

- **Artists' studio/dwelling (ASD):** A combination working studio and dwelling unit for artists, consisting of a room or suite of rooms occupied by not more than one household.
 - **Custom and craft work (C&C):** A food processing and craft work use in which nonfood, finished, personal or household items, which are either made to order or which involve considerable handwork, are produced. Examples include but are not limited to pottery and candle making, production of orthopedic devices, motion picture studios, printing, creation of sculpture and other art work, and glassblowing. The use of products or processes defined as high-impact uses shall not be considered custom and craft work.
 - **Live-work unit (LW):** A structure or portion of a structure: (1) that combines a commercial or manufacturing activity that is allowed in the zone with a residential living space for the owner of the commercial or manufacturing business, or the owner's employee, and that person's household; (2) where the resident owner or employee of the business is responsible for the commercial or manufacturing activity performed; and (3) where the commercial or manufacturing activity conducted takes place subject to a valid business license associated with the premises.
 - **Performing arts theater (P/A/T):** A theater and spectator sports facility intended and expressly designed for the presentation of live performances of drama, dance and music. (Under the definition of Entertainment Uses)
- Option #1:** If the definitions above are too restrictive for the type of work being done, “Light Manufacturing” and “Caretaker's Quarters” would be another option.
- **Caretaker's quarters (CT):** A use accessory to a nonresidential use consisting of a dwelling unit not exceeding 800 square feet of living area and occupied by a caretaker or watchperson.

■ **Manufacturing:** a use in which articles are produced by hand or by machinery, from raw or prepared materials, by giving to those materials new forms, qualities, properties, or combinations, in a process characterized by the repetitive production of items made to the same or similar specifications. Items produced are generally sold directly to other businesses, or are sold at wholesale. The retail sale of items to the general public is incidental to the production of goods. For the purpose of this definition, uses listed as food processing and craft work or high-impact uses are not considered manufacturing uses. Manufacturing uses include the following:

1. **Manufacturing, light (LM):** a manufacturing use, typically having little or no potential of creating noise, smoke, dust, vibration or other environmental impacts or pollution, and including but not limited to the following:
 - Production, assembly, finishing, and/or packaging of articles from parts made at another

location, such as assembly of clocks, electrical appliances, or medical equipment.

- Production of finished household and office goods, such as jewelry, clothing or cloth, toys, furniture, or tents, from materials that are already refined, or from raw materials that do not need refining, such as paper, fabric, leather, pre-milled wood, wool, clay, cork, fiber, semiprecious or precious metals or stones or other similar materials.
- Canning or bottling of food or beverages for human consumption using a mechanized assembly line or food processing for animal consumption.
- Printing plants with more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Option #2: For home occupations in single family and multifamily zones, please see DPD CAM 236, *Home Occupations Allowed in Residential Zones* at <http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/CAMs/CamDetail.aspx?cn=236>.

Use	Zone											
	L/RC	NC1	NC2	NC3	C1	C2	SM	IB	IC	IG1	IG2	DTWN
ASD	X	P	P	P	P	CU	P	EB/CU	EB/CU	EB/CU	EB/CU	P
C&C	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
LW	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X	P
CT/LM	X	X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X
P/A/T	X	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P/X*	P/X*	P

- X = Not Permitted
- P = Permitted
- CU = Conditional Use, permitted with potential conditions applied
- EB = Existing Buildings
- P/X* = Permitted outright in "IG" zones EXCEPT in the Duwamish M/I Center

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this CAM.

Category of Zones

Single Family Zone:

- SF 5000, SF7200, SF9600 (SF)

Multifamily Zone:

- Lowrise 1, 2 or 3 / Residential-Commercial (L/RC)

Commercial Zone:

- Neighborhood Commercial 1 (NC1)
- Neighborhood Commercial 2 (NC1)
- Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC1)
- Seattle Mixed (SM)
- Commercial 1 (C1)
- Commercial 2 (C2)

Industrial Zone:

- Industrial Buffer (IB)
- Industrial Commercial (IC)
- General Industrial 1 (IG1)
- General Industrial 2 (IG2)
- Downtown (DTWN)

GETTING STARTED

You can visit the ASC and sign up to speak with a land use planner or a permit specialist. There may be other site-specific issues and application procedures depending on the zone in relationship to the size application of the “use” for each zone. The ASC is located at 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000. You can also contact the ASC at (206) 684-8850.

OTHER HELPFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Helpful Contacts:

- Applicant Services Center: (206) 684-8850
- DPD Cashier: (206) 386-9780
- Microfilm Library: (206) 233-5180
- Seattle Fire Department: (206) 386-1400

Helpful Resources:

- DPD GIS: www.seattle.gov/dpd/onlineservices
- DPD Land Use Q&A: <http://web1.seattle.gov/dpd/LUQnA/>
- CAM 100, *Getting a Multifamily or Commercial Construction Permit from DPD*: <http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/CAMs/CamDetail.aspx?cn=100>
- CAM 102, *Getting a Small Business Use & Construction Permit from DPD*: <http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/CAMs/CamDetail.aspx?cn=102>
- CAM 236, *Home Occupations Allowed in Residential Zones*: <http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/CAMs/CamDetail.aspx?cn=236>

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.